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Universal Concord.

The first Part.

THE Sufficient TERMS

Propoſed for the Uſe of thoſe that have liberty to uſe them: And as the Authors Profeſſion of his own Religion, in [illegible]tious, dividing Age.

By [illegible]ter.

The *Firſt* and *General* Part, is preparatory to the Second Part, containing the *Particular Terms* of Reconciling the ſeverall differing Parties that are Reconcileable.

LONDON,
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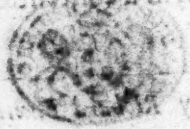

To the Reader.

Christian Reader,

I Must acquaint thee, *What it is* that is here offered thee, and *To what use and purpose.* Here is, 1. The Articles or Summe of the Christian Religion, both briefly in the Antient Creeds, and more Largly and Explicitly in a *Profession*, 1. Of Christian Belief, 2. Consent, 3. And Obedience.

2. Here is a *Form of Agreement* for the Pastors of such Churches as are left to *Voluntary* Associations and Communion.

3. Here is a larger Description of the Ministerial Offices and Church-Ordinances.

The first of these (which was formerly published as a Catechism, and is now corrected)

rected) was to me a work of greater difficulty than greater Volumes, which those will understand, that have tryed what it is to avoid *Defectiveneſs*, *Redundancies*, and *Diſorders* in ſuch a draught, (which yet I know I have not perfectly attained). The Uſes to which it was intended are theſe. 1. Whereas Mr. *John Dury* (who hath laboured above thirty years for the healing the Diviſions among the Proteſtant Churches) did ſend to the Miniſters of this County of *Worceſter*, to give him their advice and aſſiſtance in that moſt deſireable work; and whereas one principal part of our Advice was, that the Churches ſhould hold their *Unity* and *Concord* in *Neceſſary things*, and *Liberty* in things *not neceſſary*, and *Charity in both*, and that they ſhould each ſend to other a *Confeſſion* of *their Faith*, containing only ſuch *Neceſſary things*, and thereupon deſire the Acknowledgement and Communion of their Brethren: *This Profeſſion* is purpoſely fitted to that *Uſe*; containing as much as neighbour-Churches ſhould require, in order to that diſtant Communion with us or others, which ſeveral Churches are capable of; and containing nothing but what all Chriſtian Churches are agreed in. And whereas many

have

have said, that it is defective, because it contraineth nothing but what a Papist will subscribe; I answer, It is so much the better. The Churches had a perfect or sufficient Symbole or Confession of Faith, before Popery (Name or Thing) was known in the world: And they are not bound to alter and enlarge it, as oft as errours shall arise. The Rule must still remain the same; and [A Rejection of all that is contrary to this Rule] is that which we must do in opposition to Heresies and Errours. We have no new Religion, but the same antient Faith which was before Popery was conceived. If we have nothing but what they confess to be true, then *our Faith* is justified by them, (and so we are on the surer side): but they having much which we deny, their *Faith* as *Popish* is condemned by us, though their *Faith as Christian* we approve.

2. Another use of this *Profession* is to be a *sufficient* test for particular Church-Communion; (where Authority leaveth it to the Church.) I will not reject him as defective in the Articles of his Belief, who believeth but what is comprehend in this Summe.

3. It is also useful for the *Catechizing* of the Ignorant, and the clear explication of the

Creeds and the ten Commandements, to the understandings of the weak. I know it is an inconvenience to children, to have Answers so long to some of the Questions: Which I would have redressed, if I could have done it without greater inconveniences. And I know that there are hundreds of Catechisms abroad already: But if I could have told where to have found one that had contained as much as this doth, in as few words, and of worse order, I had spared this labour. Since the first Edition of this, I received the exactest that I have taken notice of, in certain Propositions, from the most Learned Author Mr. *Thomas Greaves*, much suited to the same designs as this.

To this last use some will think that there is wanting the Definition of the Sacraments of Baptism and the Lords Supper: But to them I say, 1. The antient Church did purposely conceal the mysterie of the Eucharist from the Catechumenes, till they were baptized. 2. And then it was by *sight* and observation of the actual celebration, that they first and chiefly learned the nature of it. 3. And he that *useth* them with their *Use* and *End*, (as I have here done) supposing that he speaketh to such as have seen the Administration,

miniſtration, may perhaps eſcape the cenſure of omitting any thing that is of true Neceſſity; the Doctrine and Thing ſignified by them being before explained. 4. But yet I have afterwards given a Deſcription of them, *pag.* 29. & 46. *Theſ.* 8. & 34. from whence it may be fetched for the uſe of the Catechized.

4. It is alſo uſeful to my ſelf, and others in my caſe, that have ſwarms of malicious accuſers, that would fain be queſtioning the ſoundneſs of our Faith, and accuſing us of Errours; and that have need to make it known what indeed is our Religion to Magiſtrates or Brethren, for their ſatisfaction and our juſt defence. If any queſtion, What is *My Religion?* *It is here expreſſed*: It conſiſteth in [*my Belief of all that God revealeth to me, and my Love of God in himſelf and in all the appearances of his Goodneſs; my Truſt in his fidelity, and Hope of all his Promiſed Mercies; and my Obedience to him in all his Laws; My Aſſent and Conſent in General to all the Will of God revealed in Nature or the Holy Scriptures, as far as I can underſtand them: and in particular and more diſtinctly to all the parts of this Profeſſion.*] This is my Religion; I doubt not but this much will

will be acceptable with God, and sufficient to salvation: If it be not acceptable to men; nor sufficient to my being Reputed Orthodox, and accepted into their Communion, the Day is at hand that shall reveal, whether the fault was *theirs* or *mine*. I will reject no man of *this Religion* from my *Charity* or *Communion*: I will censure, or molest, or persecute none such: If they will do otherwise by me, the suffering will at last be greatest, where the fault was greatest.

And yet (though I adhere to the antient simplicity) I will not be wanting to satisfie any as far as I am able: And therefore I have added the other two parts: *The Agreement of the Associated Ministers*, is intended for nothing else but a sufficient enumeration of all those things which Pastors, being left to so much liberty by the Magistrate, should Agree in voluntarily among themselves; But observe that it is only for such times and places of Liberty; (and there it may serve instead of all the Volumes of Canons and Decrees:) But in places and times of greater strictness, where the Civil Rulers grant no such Liberty to the Churches, much of the Articles of Agreement are in vain, and not to be practised; especially much in the sixth and seventh

venth Articles: And as we justly swear in the Oath of Supremacy, that the King is the only Supream Governour of this Realm, in all Causes Spiritual or Ecclesiastical (that is, as *to all Coercive Government about such Causes*, distinct from *Spiritual Government by the Keyes of the Word upon mens Consciences*) so we must accordingly obey him; and no Agreements, or Covenants, or Canons of our own or others, without a true and certain prohibition from the Law of God, must be pretended against our obedience to lawful powers. For Gods Law having already bound us to obey our Rulers, we cannot by any Power, or Covenants, or Agreements of our own, disoblige our selves: Otherwise men might evade a great part of their duty; and while they pretend to dispence with the Laws of God, they should, in a sort, set up themselves as above him. But if man command us to disobey our Maker, we must disobey that command, though with patient submission to sufferings, without resistance, or reproaching of our Governours.

And because some men of narrow principles, are calling for Assent to many more particulars (especially about Church-Offices, and Worship, and Discipline) and will not bear

bear with those that in smaller things dissent from them, especially if Ministers; I have added 80. *Theses* about the Offices of the Ministers of Christ, containing such things as one would think, for *Number* and *Quality*, might be taken as sufficient for our *Concord* and *Communion* with those whose *Opinions* hinder not the prosperity of *their Charity* and of *the Church*.

And now call me by what *Name* or *Title* thou seest cause; here thou hast my *Profession* and my *Judgement* about the matters of the Church: If thou desire to see the practical part that will bear it, exemplified in any *Forms*, I should not refuse to give thee such satisfaction upon any just occasion. I know of *no Title* that well agreeth to the nature of that *Religion* which indeed *I hold*, and which I have here proposed, and which I think would be fit for the Churches to agree in, but *CHRISTIAN & CATHOLIKE*, and these I own: If thou give me any other, let him that maketh or useth it, be responsible for it.

Understand also that this *General Part*, containing the *Positives of the Catholike Religion*, and fit materials of *Catholike Concord*, is but the *first Part* of the Book, the *second intended*

tended being somewhat large, as containing the particular terms on which the Abassines, Armenians, Greeks, Romanists, Lutherans, Calvinists, Arminians, Contra-remonstrants, Episcopal, Presbyterian, Independents, and moderate Anabaptists should be agreed: and discovering that with most of the parties, the present disagreements are not such as should break Communion, and cause them to reject each other as too many uncharitably do.

I conclude with one necessary Advertisement to thee, that if thou wouldst not be cheated of thy Religion by those that are still perswading men that the essentials or Fundamentals of Religion as a distinct from the Integral parts cannot be known, because no one certain perfect form of words is given to the Church which containeth those and none but those, remember that it is the *matter* and sence *believed, Loved* and *Obeyed* that is the essence of Religion and necessary to salvation for it self; but the *Words* are only *Necessary* as *revealing* or expressing the *Matter*: And therefore the *same form of words* or *sentences* is not *Necessary* alike to all. The most *General words* are most *comprehensive*, and most *certainly take in all the matter*: But then the *particular things*

things which must necessarily be understood, are not alike conceived of by all men by the helpe or use of General expressions: A wise understanding Christian when he saith but [*I believe in God the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost,*] doth distinctly conceive of all those things that essentially constitute such a true belief; when perhaps an ignoranter weaker person must have those *Generals* opened by more distinct expressions, and more particularly, before he can have a true apprehension of such essentials. And therefore the more Ignorant any person is, (*ceteris paribus*) the more large, distinct and particular his *Creed* or *Profession* should be; because he conceiveth of nothing but by very particular distinct expressions, when the judicious by a few words conceive of as much as the ignorant by many.

Though much of the *second Part* of this Treatise be long since prepared, yet so great are the threatnings of God to deprive me of opportunities of publike serving him, and so wonderful is the impatience of men against Peace makers, (as crossing their *opinions, interests* and *designes*) that I have great reason to question whether ever it will see the light: And therefore I intreat thee at the present

preſent to accept of this imperfect piece alone, from him that is reſolved by the help of Chriſt, and in confidence on his promiſe, *Matth.* 5. 9. to continue his endeavours (though weak and unſucceſful) for the Churches Peace, though it coſt him a thouſand more injuries and ſlanders, and all that furious proſperous malice can inflict, as being

His ſervant who will beare our charges, and ſave us harmleſs in his work.

Rich. Baxter.

Er-

Errata.

PAg. 4. l. 22. for [*the ſeventh day*] read [*the Sabbath day*]. pag. 10, 11. Thoſe that would have more brevity, may blot out [*to reconcile and bring me unto God*] and all after [*Sanctifier*] to the end of that Paragraph. Pag. 24. l. 12. blot out [*and Conſent*] Pag. 61. l. 1. blot out [*any*] Pag. 68. l. 3. for [*great*] r. [*urgent*] and l. 6. for [*omit*] r. [*over-paſs*]